

Mc Dougall's Good Stories for Children

The Wonderful Tiger Tree and How a Royal Youth Saved a Neighboring Kingdom and Won a Beautiful Bride

EVERY prince that I ever met has told me that he wished he had been born something else, and most of them wished they were artists. When they grow up and become kings they generally change their minds and begin to like their jobs better. But little Prince Otto, of the Kingdom of Wissol, even when he was but ten years old, had grown so tired of his splendid position that he had determined to run away at the very first chance and become a fisher-boy or a shepherd on the dim blue mountains that could be seen from the palace windows looming up in the distance.

When you realize what it means to be a prince you will readily see what had driven him to this determination. He had to learn Latin and Greek, astronomy, algebra, geometry, French, German, Turkish, Yiddish, Italian, Russian and Spanish; also horse-shoeing, medicine, painting, music, dancing and navigation, as well as a host of other things. Of course, horseback-riding, shooting and automobiling were pleasant tasks, but as so many hours in the day had to be devoted to the others he had little time to give to these, and as he was especially fond of chemistry, of course he had to sit up nights to study that, for there was no time for it during the day.

Many a time the whole palace was aroused at midnight by some tremendous report, only to find that Prince Otto had been experimenting with some new chemicals and had blown up his bedroom, so fond was he of this study, which was finally very useful in the adventure that befell him.

One day he found that he had discovered a mixture that made the most wonderful sticky fly-paper in the world; a mass that not only held every fly securely, no matter how lightly it touched it, but also drew the pesky things to it with an attraction they couldn't resist for a moment. He was very much delighted, for he now knew that his name would be forever famous, for it is far greater to have invented something useful than to be a prince.

He had spread the stuff upon a great sheet of paper and left it upon his table, and when he awoke in the morning he heard a small, squeaky voice in his room. He sat up in bed and looked around, but saw no one, yet it was still audible. Somebody was crying, and tiny as was the voice it seemed to be right in the room. Then he heard words plainly, saying:

"Shame upon you, false, fleeting friends! My fate will be on your heads!"

"What is the matter?" cried Otto, jumping out of bed.

A silence followed, but when Otto asked "Who is here and in trouble?" the tiny voice replied:

"Help! Help! I am stuck in this awful stuff and can't get out."

Otto saw nothing on the fly-paper, yet it was from that the voice came. He passed his hand over it, however, and was amazed to find it touched something that was invisible. It moved beneath his fingers as if trembling as he asked:

"What is it? Who are you?"

"I am the elf Kaskara," replied the voice. "I am caught here, else you would not have me at your mercy."

"But you are not at my mercy," cried the Prince. "I would never hurt an elf, I am sure. The ideal Nothing is farther from my mind."

"Then why did you set this trap?" asked the elf, invisible still.

"I set a trap? Why, that's for flies. Who ever expected to catch an elf? Ha, ha!" laughed Otto.

"That's right, laugh at me. You've caught me, and you may laugh," grumbled Kaskara.

"But why can't I see you?" asked Otto. "Just show yourself, and I'll get you out of that in a jiffy!"

He suddenly saw the elf, standing over his ankles in the sticky stuff. He was dressed in red leather and his beard came to his knees. His face was very anxious, as he looked up at the Prince, but the boy was so kindly and so smiling that he soon seemed easier in his mind, and as Otto removed the stickiness from about his feet he smiled himself. Then the Prince carefully lifted him, after which he took turpentine and extracted of Alamosoline, and in a very short time had effaced even the traces of the sticky fluid from his tiny low shoes and wool stockings.

The elf sat down upon a pill box and said:

"You are very good," said Kaskara, "and now as a sort of a fine for trespassing I will give you three wishes; or, rather, two now and one later, after you see how the others work. What do you most wish for?"

"Oh," replied the boy, "I would wish to be loved by everybody, for a prince is so very lonely and so lousy that he is never really loved."

"That's easy enough," said the elf, smiling, "but I am afraid so much affection will bother you. What's the next wish?"

"What! Have I wished once?" cried Otto, in surprise.

"Certainly. That was a wish, and it's all accomplished. Next!"

"Well, I certainly wish that I could be invisible like you when I want to," added Otto, thoughtfully.

"All you have to do is to put your thumbs together and say 'Zobasto' and it's done. To become visible, say 'Pastik'. Now, in a week or two I'll see you again and we will talk over the third wish. I can stay no longer, for I must be off to punish my comrades for running away and leaving me in the lurch, although, after all, I am not sorry now, as I have learned that human beings are not to be feared. So I will be off. Good morning!"

Otto was left alone, and the first thing he did was to put his thumbs together and say "Zobasto," after which he went downstairs and was delighted to find that nobody could see him at all.

"Oh, my! Now I'll have fun!" he cried. "This is splendid. Now to find out how my first wish works." He said "Pastik" and walked out into the great palace garden where all the courtiers spent their time.

As soon as he appeared every one ran to him and showed the greatest pleasure at seeing him, and it was very evident that he was loved by all. Even the Regent, who ruled the kingdom for him, as he was an orphan, showed real feeling, although the day before he had hated him, for he wished himself to be king, but had not dared to seize the throne for fear of the people. Wherever the Prince appeared he was greeted with cheers, flowers were thrown over him, presents given to him and all the

ladies wanted to fondle and kiss him every minute. The change was most wonderful, as before that nobody thought much of him, because, kept indoors by his many studies, he had been rarely seen abroad.

But in a few days all this excessive loving began to be somewhat of a nuisance to the boy, as he now couldn't take a step without being bothered; for, of course, both great and small wished to express the feeling they had for their prince. Many a time he was compelled to put together his thumbs and say "Zobasto" just to avoid a loving crowd of his subjects; and soon the mysterious absences, for that's what they were considered, of course, began to be gossiped about all over the land, and the place of his sudden retreats was sought for everywhere.

It amused him to walk in the midst of a crowd and hear them guessing as to where he had hidden himself, as well as telling of their great affection for him; but after a time, when they all began to discuss the project of sending the much-hated Regent away and making Otto king, although still so young, he became alarmed, for he did not wish to be king for ever so long yet.

When at last he overheard in the garden several of the principal nobles arranging the plot he determined to go away and stay for a time, for, of course, without him they would not act. So packing up his diamond-studded gold hair-brushes, his crown, his ruby-mounted toothbrush, his box of paints and a bag of gold in a small valise, and after putting on the plainest suit of clothes he could find among the hundreds hanging in his closets and girding on his jeweled sword, he softly said "Zobasto" and stole forth early in the morning.

Past the guards of the castle he walked stealthily,



The Tiger Tree With the Dreadful Fruit Just Ready to Fall

and out upon the great highway that led across his kingdom toward the blue mountains on the border. On the road were many wagons moving into town filled with potatoes, cabbages, apples and other farm produce, although the sun was hardly up yet, and he wondered when these people who drove them got out of bed.

Quail came running out of the woods at the roadside and rabbits scampered across the highway, while overhead so many birds were making music that it seemed as if the very air was a river of melody flowing along with him.

Every animal that he passed or met acted in the same way, all flocking to him lovingly and many followed him for a long distance, which caused a panic among a crowd of gypsies traveling towards where they came upon him and his followers at a turn in the road. As soon as they saw him they shouted "Wizard!" "Magician!" and began to get out their guns, for they were strangers and did not know the Prince of Wissol.

The animals crowding about Otto seemed uncertain what to do, but when the first gun went off the Prince quickly uttered the magic word, and no longer seeing him they fled in a hurry. I tell you they were frightened, but their fright was as nothing to the terror of the gypsies when Otto vanished like smoke before their eyes and nothing was to be seen but the bare road winding among the trees. So alarmed were they that they turned their wagons and in a hurry whipped their horses to leave a place too full of mystery, but Otto, who had grown somewhat tired, ran to a wagon and climbed in.

Here he found a woman and a child lying on cushions who had not seen the cause of the alarm, and they were trying to discover what it was by peering out through a hole in the canvas covering of the wagon. Otto, when he had made himself comfortable, said "Pastik" and when they turned they saw him sitting there. Although greatly surprised, they of course loved him at once and began to ask questions, whereupon he explained what had happened, although he did not tell them that he had been invisible.

The woman was the gypsy queen, Berlina, and she soon called for her husband, who came on a run, still filled with wonder and alarm.

Otto was not sorry to be able to ride with them, for he had never thought of taking a horse from the royal stables and making his journey on horseback. Anyway, it would have looked very funny, he reflected, to see a horse going along alone if he happened to wish to become invisible, so it was perhaps best as it was.

He found the gypsies very entertaining, telling most wonderful stories of the lands they had seen and the things they had done, so the time passed very pleasantly. They journeyed slowly; it took them four days to make the nine leagues to Umpallan, for it was toilsome work climbing the tall mountains, as the road wound around and around beside yawning chasms and deep valleys, yet never seeming to bring them nearer to the top, until suddenly they came out between two great cliffs, and lo! they saw the vast plain on the other side stretch-

ing out before them in the bright sunshine like a great green carpet.

Away off on the extreme horizon Otto saw what seemed to be an immensely tall palm tree against the blue sky, and as he turned to ask the gypsy king what sort of a tree it was, he saw that the king turned pale and trembled.

"What is the matter?" asked the Prince.

"Luck is against us," answered Moribundo, the gypsy. "We must turn back at once. I dare not go on, but I do wish that somebody had told us about this before we started to climb the mountains."

"But what is it? Why must we return?"

"Yonder is the reason," replied Moribundo. "That tree which you see in the distance is the Tiger Palm! It has bloomed again!"

"What of it? Is it unlucky?" asked the boy.

"Worse than unlucky! It means death itself! That tree grows but once in a century, but when it blooms it sheds death and destruction!"

"Is it a poisonous tree?" asked Otto.

"Have you never heard of the dread Tiger Palm?" cried Moribundo. "It is not really a tree, for instead of a crown of leaves it bears at its top an enormous tiger's head, around which a hundred legs armed with sharp claws hang down. Look! Even from here you can see it raise its head! In a short time it will fall to the ground, and then what sorrow and woe will be upon this land, for it will devour many people. Nothing can escape the terrible beast when once it is loosened from the tall stalk upon which it grows now."

"Yes, we must turn and get as far away from this place as possible, for well I know what will happen, as my grandfather told me what his father told him about the last time the Tiger Palm bloomed in this ill-fated land."

"Well, I will go on," said Otto, "for I wish to learn more about this wonder. We have no such in Wissol."

"For which you should be truly thankful," added the gypsies, and then he tried to induce Otto to return with him, but the Prince was true to his determination; and so saying farewell to them all he started down the winding road to Umpallan. On the way he thought over the wonderful Tiger Palm, and came to the conclusion that the people of the land must be exceedingly simple not to have destroyed it long before it grew up. He decided to make the attempt himself, for he thought that it would be rather easy to accomplish. After a while, when he had reached the level land, he came to a small house beside the road, and stopping he knocked at the door. An old woman of so hideous an appearance that she startled him opened it, and was about to tell him to begone, but in a moment the elf's spell was working and she fell in love with him, as everybody else had done, and she invited him to enter.

"What do you here, my lad with the pleasant face?" she asked. "What seek you with the witch of Umpallan? Do you need charms?"

"I wish to buy some food," responded Otto, "for I have eaten but little since last night." Then he told her how the gypsies had been frightened away,

that I sold him, but I will tell you that the spell is all tummy rot and foolishness, for it won't work. So old Quintessence, as well as all of us, perhaps, will be eaten up finally, and that's what I want. I hate everybody here, except you, of course."

"You are a bitter old creature," said Otto, "but I will not let you harm any more people with your spells and enchantments."

"Why, bless your heart," she cried, "you don't suppose I can really do harm! Why, all my spells are rubbish. Don't you know there's no such thing? I just let them believe in them, but, dear me, they're all harmless. Indeed, I wish I was a witch, but there are none, really. But so long as the fools believe in me and pay me, why not take their money?"

He soon came in sight of the city over which, high in air, hung the terrible Tiger with his hundred legs suspended limply, his glaring eyes shining with the light of hungry impatience, for he was nearly ripe and ready to drop. Many of the houses were empty, deserted by their occupants from fear of the Tiger, but since old Quintessence had announced that the sacrifice of the young princes would avert all danger, the rest of the inhabitants of Umpallan remained in the city, but with fear and trembling.

He went close to the tree at last, closer than anyone had ever dared to go, and the Tiger glared down at him, showing his teeth and growling, but Otto grinned at him carelessly and the beast felt a thrill of fear go through him, as this was the first time anyone had dared to meet his eye. Something told him that here was his destroyer below him, and he trembled so that the tree trunk wobbled.

Then Otto went to the palace and asked for admission, but as he was dusty and travel-stained the pompous doorkeeper refused to admit him, telling him to go around to the kitchen door, as befits all tramps. Otto was about to strike him with his sword, but recollected in time that he had no right to cut off the heads of any but his own subjects, so he went around to the kitchen and asked the cook for lodging.

You see he had not given the doorkeeper time to fall in love with him, as he asked so suddenly for admission, but on this occasion he waited until the fat cook had taken a good look at him and the charm worked. She said that he could stay there and he could share her bed, but he promptly declined, saying that he wouldn't be able to sleep in the world. Then she told him that he could sleep in the hay in the stable over the horses. After supper he went to sleep there, tired and yet happy, for he had solved the problem of destroying the Tiger.

Early in the morning the Princess Azoline, looking out of her window, spied Otto asleep on the hay, and she, of course, promptly fell in love with him. Running down, she tiptoed lightly into the stable and bent over him. She saw that he was very handsome, although so dusty, but when she looked into his valise and saw the gold crown, the brushes and the bag of gold she knew at once that he was a prince in disguise.

Then she told the cook to bring him to breakfast, but when the cook went to awake him he had disappeared. There lay his leather bag, and she saw the place where he had slept in the hay, but no

The Story of a Little Prince Who Was Tired of His Mode of Life and Wonderful Experiences He Had When He Ran Away

before they had breakfast. She hastened to set food before him, smiling as she did so a smile that made her awful face more hideous. He ate what she gave him and offered her some gold from his bag, but she said:

"No, I will take no pay. I know not how it is, but you must have some magic power, for you are precious in my eyes. From another I would have taken not only all his gold, but his wits as well. Whither go you?"

"I am the Prince of Wissol, and I journey to see the world. What shall I find beyond?" asked Otto.

"Two things to dread and avoid," she replied. "One is the Tiger Tree that in a few days, perhaps, will be ripe and drop its dire fruit, when all the land will weep; the other is old Quintessence, the uncle of Princess Azoline, a man of blood and villainy. I tell you this, I who have been his partner in crime. Why I tell you I know not, for it is a strange thing to me, but it is the truth. He will slay you for your gold, or imprison you to toss you to the tiger when he gets loose."

"I will probably slay him first if he tries to play any pranks on me," said Otto.

"Avoid him! Keep far from the palace, where he now rules until the Princess comes of age."

"She seems as unlucky as myself," said Otto. "Is she, too, an orphan?"

"Yes. Her parents have been dead seven years, and it will be some years still before she is old enough to be queen; but that will never happen, for Quintessence has been teaching the people that if she is sacrificed to the tiger just before he drops to the ground the beast will be satisfied and depart from the land. Thus he hopes to rid himself of her, and afterward destroy the tiger by a magic spell

prince was visible, because as soon as he awoke Otto said "Zobasto," for he wished to watch the old Prime Minister Quintessence without being visible, as, once seen, the old man would love him and he could not properly punish him for his wickedness.

He softly stole through the many rooms of the palace, up and up, until at last, on the very top floor, he found him in a very small room, where he mixed the nasty-smelling potions and compounds for which he paid the so-called witch for instruction, thinking them very potent and deadly to his foes. He also had many chemicals around him of which he knew almost nothing, but which he bought to give his room the appearance of a laboratory or chemist's workshop, so that people would consider him an alchemist and astrologer.

When Otto stole in the curtains were drawn tight and the room was very dark, but he saw the old man bending over a small lamp, the blue flame of which dimly lighted the hard old face and wicked eyes. Then Otto, seeing the chemicals, with all of which he was so familiar, resolved to frighten the pretended astrologer, and taking some phosphorus he mixed it with sulphur and then wrote on the wall with his finger dipped in the mixture. This is what he wrote:

"SAMOLIO DUPLEXUS BISMALLAH SWAN ORAPROMISKUS!"

The words shone in fire as bright as sunlight. Then he spoke in a hollow tone and said:

"Quintessence, thou old villain, turn!"

The Prime Minister, astounded that anybody should so address him, turned in great wrath, but when he saw nothing but the mysterious flaming words upon the wall he fell back in a fright. After a moment he managed to ask, weakly:

"Who and what are you? What means these dread words on the wall?"

Of course he thought that it was some spook he had answered to his incantations, or some mighty demon of the dark had responded to his frequent summons, and yet he was terrified. Otto answered:

"I am the genie of the cave, Abuzeram the Shining One! I am come to demand an accounting of your trust! What have you done with all the gold and jewels of the kingdom which the late king left you? What are you about to do with the Princess Azoline?"

Quintessence fell on his knees, shaking with terror.

"I have the gold, O lord Genie! I have concealed it in the cellar, as well as all the jewels of the late king and queen, in the cellar of an old house which I own in the city. You shall have them all, all!"

"Where is this house?" asked Otto.

"At the corner of Doldrum and Bitumen streets," replied the old thief. "It was about to sacrifice the Princess to the Tiger, oh Shining One, but if you wish I will give her to you!"

"You will do nothing of the sort!" replied Otto. "This is what you will do: In less than half an hour you will be in your carriage and moving out of the kingdom quickly, never to return, and dare not go near your old house for the gold, for that I have guarded with flaming demons, ten in number, who will eat you alive if you approach. If you are here a half-hour hence I will sack them on you at once. So get!"

Otto couldn't think of any more to say, therefore he drew a great skull and crossbones in fire on the wall, as the old man knelt there paralyzed with terror, and wrote under the picture the words:

"THIS FOR YOU!"

That settled him. Quintessence sprang up and flew howling down the stairs and shrilly yelled for his carriage and the fastest horses he had. In less than ten minutes the people were amazed to see the Prime Minister leap into his carriage, and, pale with fright, order his driver to hurry. He was never seen again in Umpallan, but it was a long time before he was forgotten and the people ceased to dread his return.

Then Otto went to the Princess and told her that he had come to destroy the Tiger Palm.

Then he called the towns-people together and informed them that he had come to rescue them, after which he led them out to the Tiger-Palm and commanded them to cut down all the small trees for yards and yards, while he measured the height of the palm by trigonometry, thanking his stars, after all, that he had been forced to study that science so well. Then he ordered all the blacksmiths to build a huge cage, a cage so strong that a dozen tigers couldn't even jar it, just seventy-five feet from the foot of the tree.

It took a week to build the great cage, which was constructed with a door on top, all of steel as thick as your arm, and when it was ready Otto called for all the wood-choppers to assemble. He took a ladder, and, much to the alarm of the people, climbed far up the tree-trunk, after which he fastened rope to it, giving the end to a man at a distance. They he bade the wood-choppers cut down the tree. As it they went, and in less than an hour it began to totter, while the enraged and terrified tiger on top struggled, roared, scratched, wriggled, twisted, clawed, squirmed and panted.

Then, as the great tree began to fall, the men at the ropes pulled and hauled in different directions, guiding it in its descent as Otto ordered, until at last down it came with a bang, landing the enraged Tiger upside down in the steel cage. They saw the tree trunk off just outside, after shutting down the door and fastening it, and while the Tiger clawed around inside they stood there and laughed at him, for nobody feared him a bit now.

They got him just in time, for he was very ripe, and that very day he came off the stalk, so to speak, and went rampaging up and down his cage like anything but the fruit of a tree. It was of no use, however. They pulled away the fragment of the tree trunk and ran in some steel bars, and he was as harmless as a mouse. Then they mounted the cage on wheels and hauled him to the city museum, where now you may see him yourself if you ever happen to go to Umpallan, which is, as I've said, nine leagues from Wissol in a straight line over the mountains.

Otto married the Princess, and now is king of both countries. He is famous as the only king who knows more than Emperor William does, and that's fame enough for anybody. Later on I will tell you about his third wish and what came of it, and that's a very strange story, also.

WALT McDUGALL.